

HISTORY
OF
BRAGGVILLE
SECTION

of
HOLLISTON, MEDWAY AND
MILFORD



ERNEST A. BRAGG

A HISTORY OF THE TOWNS
of
HOLLISTON, MEDWAY AND MILFORD
including
THE COUNTIES OF WORCESTER,
MIDDLESEX AND NORFOLK
Which Join in This Area
FROM 1667 to 1950

BRAGG

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A FOREWORD

The history of Braggville is so important an event in the development of the United States of America that I feel it necessary to publish this work that the memory of the beginning of three important epochs in our history may not go by without any record of its achievement being left to the public.

ERNEST A. BRAGG

Author

A history of the village in the area covered by the junction of three towns namely Holliston, Milford and Medway including the counties namely Middlesex, Worcester and Norfolk, an area which was very important during the Civil War period and the home of momentous changes in the history of the United States of America; an area destined for oblivion which should not be allowed to occur.

In 1667 there arrived in Salem, Mass., two brothers, one of whom was Henry Bragg.

His son, Alexander Bragg, was a resident of Salem, Attleboro and Wrentham. He was followed by Royal Bragg of Wrentham and Franklin, a farmer, who after planting his crops, left his wife, the mother of three small children, to tend the crops, and enlisted in the Continental Army where he contracted smallpox and lost his life in the service.

This left his wife a widow with three small children to care for and located among loving neighbors who destroyed her crops and left her destitute among enemies.

Under these circumstances she was obliged to put her eldest son out to service to earn his own living where he fell into the hands of unscrupulous masters from whom, years later, he purchased his freedom.

After obtaining his freedom he migrated to Brookline, Mass., and obtained an apprenticeship with a cobbler by the name of Toleman.

Here he learned the art of shoemaking, soon becoming so proficient that he could serve Mr. Toleman's best customers.

During his service he contracted smallpox and was confined in a hospital where, in his own words, he was "one scab from head to foot."

Upon recovery, he completed his apprenticeship and moved to Holliston, Mass., where he went to live with one Asa Rockwood where, in the year of 1793, he manufactured his first lot of shoes.

To manufacture this lot he had tools valued at \$2.50; four calfskins, valued at \$7.00, and 40 pounds of sole leather, value unknown.

From this leather he manufactured 22 pairs of shoes, packed them in saddle bags, drove to Providence and sold the lot for \$21.50.

This, I believe, was the beginning of the wholesale boot and shoe business in the United States of America.

He continued his manufacture in this location until 1794 when he moved to the home of Asa Norcross.

At the time of this move, the road turned right about one-quarter mile toward Holliston and came out on Adams Street, near the town bound, before entering Milford.

This old road, if I am correctly informed, still exists as a county road completely overgrown and now impassable.

At the present time there is no known record as to who or when the road was straightened as it now runs.

The old Pierce Place adjoining the Messenger Farm on the North is one of the oldest places in Holliston.

It is now remodeled and altered in such a manner as to lose much of its original look.

In the early years Mr. Pierce maintained a picnic grove in the pines across the road from his home.

In October, 1795, he moved into a small home, the first house in Milford, now marked by a bronze tablet by Aaron Phipps.

This move required that he increase his business by approximately 100%, the largest expansion of his career.

In the early years of his business there lived close to the Milford line a cobbler who manufactured a novel pair of boots in which there was no seam in the front, it being stretched and formed in shape to conform to the outline of the foot.

The Colonel tried unsuccessfully to learn how this was accomplished. Not being able to learn, he originated the form known as a boot tree—thousands of which were manufactured in Milford.

Six months later he increased his business again by hiring Jonathan Bryant for one year at a cost of 90 dollars.

During this year, with his mother as housekeeper, he established in the house of Aaron Phipps what I believe was the first strictly wholesale boot and shoe business in America.

Boot and sohes were imported from England in barrel lots. At this period of the business there were no rights or lefts in the trade, boots and shoes being worn on either foot. This business grew rapidly for the time when horse and wagon were the only means of transportation.

By this time he had decided to acquire real estate and in March 1803 he bought 18 acres and buildings from Perry Daniels.

In April, 1803, he bought 28 rods from Daniel Hemingway;

On March 15, 1805, nine acres and 100 rods from James Perry;

In December, 1805, thirteen acres and 68 rods from Walter Bullard;

In December, 1806, six acres and 80 rods from Aaron Bullard;

In October, 1806, nine acres from Jonathan Bullard;

On June 1, 1806, one acres and 134 rods from Abner Pond;

In December, 1807, ten acres from Elias Lovering.

In December, 1808, eight acres from Enoch Chamberlain; In August, 1816, eighty-eight acres and 53 rods from John Littlefield;

In May, 1828, eighteen acres and 90 rods from James Cutlet;

In April, 1831, one acre and one horse from
Deborah Kilborn;

In March, 1835, one acre from Maynard Bragg;
A total of 178 acres and 73 rods.

In 1839 he was elected Representative to the General Court of the State and three years later he was elected Senator from this district.

He served in the State Militia in every rank from private to colonel of a regiment. He also served his own town of Milford in many important capacities.

From 1795 he increased his business by hiring one additional workman each year until in 1809 he curtailed his business and built his new residence with sufficient room to house his workmen.

At about this time he built his new shop across the street from his home.

This shop, the largest in Milford at the time, was moved from place to place finally arriving at a location on Rockland Street where it now stands, a two tenement dwelling.

The original shop of his son, Arial, Jr., was moved and formed a tenement nearby, but it was finally destroyed by fire.

This and other businesses in importance until 1848 which marked the coming of the Boston and Worcester Railroad was opened for traffic and the first tickets were sold in the store across the road which was operated by Mr. Dennis Hartshorn.

This, of course, was a great step in advancement as it established a means of quick communication with

Boston with access to horse-drawn vehicles.

As the railroad approached Milford, stone for bridges, culverts and retaining walls was obtained from a Mr. Barker who operated a quarry located the the front yard of what later became the Braggyville District School, now the Braggyville Community House.

In time this boulder was exhausted and a new boulder was selected further back from the road, the remains of which may still be found.

The quality of this stone so impressed the railroad management that they decided to establish a quarry of their own.

Accordingly they purchased a tract of land from Mr. Alpheus Perry on which was located an immense boulder known to the early settlers as the threshing rock because its flat top furnished a threshing rock because its flat top furnished a threshing floor for them to thresh their granite.

To carry on their granite work, the railroad management obtained Mr. William Bartlett as their superintendent and established a cutting yard adjacent to the Braggyville Depot where much of the early stone work was cut to proper dimensions.

In this yard were cut, by the same man, all of the mile stones marking the mileage to Boston.

Of all these markers, only one, that closest to the Braggyville Station, was broken and had to be replaced.

It is interesting to know that many of these markers still stand where they were originally set on the right as one travels to Boston.

At this point it seems proper to digress and refer briefly to records left in this territory by the glaciers of the Ice Ages.

The territory of Braggyville seems to have been uncommonly blessed by leavings of the glaciers.

Where or how it occurred, we have no direct knowledge. But at some time in the past, this territory must have been the scene of volcanic action as proof of which we know that volcanic rock was uncovered in the East Holliston area when the railroad was built.

Returning to the Braggyville area, we know of the immense boulders used for early quarries and also we know of boulders now which are an evidence of the Ice Ages.

On the Messenger Farm, less than a mile toward Holliston, is an immense boulder so balanced on another boulder as to appear easy to push off.

There appears to be well founded rumor that George Washington once stopped here and attempted to push it off—an event that has repeatedly been tried by others.

The Threshing Rock, original quarry of the railroad, was another of the immense boulders and about a quarter of a mile west in the woods is another boulder so delicately balanced that it can be rocked by a person on its top and the thump can be heard for long distances.

The local name of the old settlers for this boulder was "The Calle Thump" and I am told it still works. There were many other of these immense boulders left by the glaciers of the Ice Ages.

To return to the building of the railroad. As it approached Milford, near the site of the Braggville Station, the then road turned left and crossed the right of way of the railroad where a beautiful stone arch was built for the railroad to cross.

This arch has now been buried beneath the railroad embankment and lost to view forever.

This old road was abandoned when the towns of Holliston and Medway built the new road now known as South Street.

The building of this road caused much controversy and forced the then owner of a large farm, the tillable area of which was ruined, to sell his property and depart.

My grandfather, Arial Bragg, Jr., purchased the land and immediately planted a line of maple trees along the road.

The Town of Holliston has never, to the present day, established the bounds of this road.

Previous to the building of the railroad there had been built a large two-story store building in which my grandfather, Dennis Hartshorn, conducted a country grocery store. Before the building of the railroad station, tickets were sold in this store and my grandfather eventually became Station Master, U. S. Postmaster and Adams Express Agent. He held this position for more than 40 years after which I took over and continued for another ten years.

In the late 1870's, two Shippe Brothers, born in Braggville and then living in Holliston, acquired the use of land, formerly the cutting yard of the railroad

granite work, and constructed brick kilns for the burning of charcoal.

There were eventually six of these kilns—four of eight cord and two of ten cord capacity. These kilns required one week to burn and one week to cool off.

To feed these kilns, the Shippee Brothers stripped all surrounding territory of all standing wood they could buy. Since that time, all brooks in the territory have almost completely dried up during the summer season and annual forest fires have prevailed.

Another early activity, not far from the source of Hopping Brook in Rocky Woods, was the George Adams Saw Mill where early settlers could obtain sawed lumber.

We will now return to the railroad granite work.

The Threshing Rock Quarry having been exhausted, the railroad had acquired a new tract of land from one Dexter Brown where appearances indicated a very large outcropping of parent-ledge of granite.

In the early years of this operation the stone was quarried in this new location, carted about a quarter of a mile to the old cutting yard; but circumstances demanded a new cutting yard and the management established a new yard about one-half a mile toward Milford where the cutting sheds were arranged in circular form enabling the derrick to serve more than one shed.

In this location, with Mr. James M. Sherman as superintendent, following the death of Mr. William Bartlett, all the stone used in the extension of the road to Albany, N. Y., was cut. The celebrated Worcester Station was cut here.

A part of the station is still standing and the dismantled part was used, so as to obtain the weathered look, in the construction of one of Worcester's smaller churches. Also the carved lions which adorned the entrance to the station now mark the entrance of one of Worcester's public parks.

The closing of this railroad works left a matter of 300 men out of a job with no immediate prospect of new work and was a serious blow to the community.

Eventually four of the foremen on the work, with one of the workmen, began work for themselves. One, Theodore N. Sherman, selected a location in Milford; two of the others, Mr. William Sherman and Mr. James M. Sherman, selected locations near each other in Rocky Woods. Mr. Bartlett and Albro behan on a large boulder on land of Mr. Bartlett near the railroad quarry.

Much to everyone's surprise, when Mr. James M. Sherman opened his quarry it proved to be a beautiful pink stone and Milford Pink Granite had been discovered. It immediately became popular and Mr. Bartlett of Bartlett and Albro, began search for other pink stone. He was successful and before long they had a two-car siding close to the Beaver Street Crossing.

Such was the condition when the pink granite came to the notice of Norcross Brothers of Worcester. They came to Milford and made arrangements to take over the firm of Bartlett and Albro making Mr. Bartlett their superintendent and assuring Mr. Albro of permanent employment.

The contract of the Allegheny Court House and Jail was soon signed and Milford Pink Granite was on its way up.

During the years required for the development of the railroad, there had been built the Braggville Station Building, the Braggville Hotel, two large boot-shops, a picnic grove with dance floor. At that time the Civil War was in progress and the boot and shoe industry was booming supplying the Government with boots and shoes for the army.

During this time Mr. Appleton Bragg had been in the brokerage business in New York and amassed a fortune, he having at one time had control of all sole leather in the country. Due to his success, he was able, when his father became financially embarrassed, to return to Milford and buy his father's farm thus relieving the situation and preventing a failure.

After taking over the farm, he built many small tenements for workmen, and also the very elaborate hotel with the grove and dance floor. This was so attractive that excursion trains used to come from Boston for a day's picnic.

In the late 1860's the hotel burned and a little over a year later both of the large boot-shops burned during the same night. This practically terminated the business of three of four firms who occupied the ships for finishing and packing their product for marketing.

It must be borne in mind that in this period most of the work in boot and shoe making was taken to small home shops, there completed and returned when done. Owing to this, it was not very long before the manufactures were able to continue in temporary new quarters.

The territory of Braggville contains a part of three towns and three counties—namely, Holliston in Middlesex County, Milford in Worcester County, and Medway in Norfolk County.

In this territory are now located two small businesses—the Kampersal Dairy and the Moore Monument Works. The Post Office has been abandoned, the Railroad Station torn down and Braggville is obviously to become an all but forgotten name in the future.

However, as it was the home of the beginning of the boot and shoe business, the home of the beginning of the great stone business—it is not proper to have it pass into oblivion without a memorial. It was also the home of the discoverer of the well known Milford Pink Granite in the late 1870's.

I am writing this history that it may not be entirely forgotten how and when the celebrated Milford Pink Granite became popular, and incidentally, why Milford became so thickly populated with Italian-speaking residents.

The Boston and Worcester Railroad had established rail service in 1848 and soon thereafter had established their granite works with the cutting yard on the lot by the Braggville Station with their quarry about 100 yards away on a road running west to the town line. The stone was quarried a mile or more away on Adams Street in Holliston. This was slightly north of the junction of the main road to Holliston with Adams Street. When or by whom the road was straightened to its present location seems to be a matter of grave doubt. If I am correctly informed, the old location, now overgrown and impassible, is still a county road.

The railroad had established service in July, 1848, and soon after had operate its granite works on a lot adjacent to the Braggyville Station Building. In doing so it had established a large blacksmith shop on the road running west by the station. This road ended at the town line further to the west.

At a later date, Mr. Appleton Bragg, at his own expense, extended this road to the Milford-Holliston road about a quarter mile away. When the town of Milford refused to accept it as a town road, he dug a ditch to render it impassable and to the best of my knowledge, remains of the ditch still exist.

At this time the boot and shoe business was booming; two large new shops had been built across the road from the station and Braggyville gave prospect of becoming an active business center.

Mr. Appleton Bragg, pursuant to his success in New York, had built the new and elaborate hotel, a large two-story structure with an ell to house the help. This connected with the large barn so elaborately built that the horse stalls were finished in dressed oak. In addition he had erected small tenements for workmen—both boot and shoe and stone workers.

One of the early jobs in this stone work was to cut the milestones, so-called, to indicate the distance from Boston. These stones were set in the embankment on the right of the track at every mile and to the present day, many may be observed as one travels by train.

Only one of these markers was broken in cutting and that was the one nearest the Braggyville Station. It was replaced by a new one.

Just when Braggville appeared to be on the way to becoming a prosperous business center, disaster was on the way.

It first struck the hotel, which burned in that late 1860's; then the boot shops burned in the 1870's, followed by the closing of the railroad granite work in the 1870's and Braggville was without any business in the difficult recession following the Civil War.

The termination of the granite business was the end of the first great granite business in the town of Milford and it left some 300 workmen to find new jobs. Following the termination of this business, three of the sons of James N. Sherman—namely, T. N. Sherman, James M. Sherman and William Sherman—with Henry Bartlett and Jesse D. Albro elected to start businesses of their own.

T. N. Sherman selected a location in Milford, probably off Cedar Street; James M. Sherman and William Sherman selected boulders in the Rocky Woods area in the northern part of Milford, and Bartlett and Albro began on a large boulder located on land belonging to Mr. Bartlett.

After due preparation each began business on the new locations. When Mr. James began on the boulder of his selection it proved to be a beautiful delicate pink and Milford Pink Granite had been discovered.

The discovery of Pink Granite and later the Victoria White Granite raised some very interesting questions. Geologists tell us that unless granite is formed under great pressure it will become what is known as vein granule, very loosely crystallized and unworkable. So we know that our granite was formed deep in the

earth. This indicates a volcano in this vicinity and we know that when the railroad was built, a ledge of volcanic rock was encountered in the vicinity of East Holliston. This does not locate the volcano but it does prove it to have been near enough to have formed the granite in the area.

Another factor is the metamorphic rock which covers the whole area and which is known to have baked in the heat of cooling granite. A second baking period occurred when the Pink Granite was thrust up and a third and much lesser baking occurred upon formation of the Victoria White Granite, each one of which cooled from a different liquid mixture.

The pink stone immediately became popular as Mr. Bartlett searched Rocky Woods and found one. Then he and Mr. Albro secured a railroad siding near the Beaver Street Crossing capable of holding two flat-cars and began shipping stone from there. About this time popularity of the pink stone had come to the attention of Norcross Bros. of Worcester and they came to Milford, bargained with Bartlett and Albro, taking over their quarry and making Mr. Bartlett their superintendent and assuring Mr. Albro a permanent job.

This deal was soon followed by the contract for the Allegheny Court House and Jail at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Milford Pink Granite had become nationally known. A more or less complete record of Milford Pink Granite may be found in my history of the Milford Pink Granite in Milford, Mass.

Somewhat previous to this time, Mr. Appleton Bragg had, at his own expense, constructed a new road from the Holliston line to East Main Street in Milford.

This shortened the distance to the Railroad Station by about one half a mile. This road was offered to Milford and refused. After the refusal a fence was built across it at the Holliston line and at some distance away a ditch was dug to prevent its use. Evidence of this ditch still exists.

In the early days of the business the railroad management procured a very heavy, rugged ox cart and a pair of extra large, heavy oxen to draw the rough stone from the quarry to the cutting yard. One day a heavy stone slipped and fell on Mr. William Bartlett's foot, crushing it and pinning Mr. Bartlett to the ground. There being no other means, Mr. was placed on the ox cart and driven to his home nearly a mile away.

At a later date Mr. Bartlett died of consumption and Mr. James N. Sherman succeeded him as superintendent of the stone business.

During the earlier years of this business, Mr. Arial Bragg, Jr., a manufacturer, shipped a case of boots to Boston which, on arrival, was found to have been opened, the boots removed and rubbish substituted. Mr. Bragg made a claim for the cost of the goods and after several unsuccessful calls, the man in charge informed Mr. Bragg that if he called again he would be thrown out.

After supper that night, Mr. Bragg and his son built a wall across the road to the quarry and forbade further hauling of stone over his land. Needless to say, the claim was promptly settled and business was resumed as before.

This incident probably was a leading factor in the decision of the railroad to establish a new and more convenient cutting yard where there was much more room and a siding long enough to hold fifteen to twenty cars. In this new yard the cutting sheds were built in circular form so that one derrick could serve two or more sheds and the haul from the quarry was much shorter. In this new yard was cut and shipped all the stone used in extending the road to Albany, New York.

Outstanding of all the stone here quarried, was the Worcester Station, a part of which now stands still occupied as the Railroad Express office. A part of the building was dismantled and the stone, without recutting, was used to construct one of Worcester's smaller churches and the two lions which were at the entrance now adorn the entrance to one of Worcester's public parks.

It is quite probable that I am the only person now living who walked all over the bottom of this quarry now under seventy feet of water.

As a ten-year-old boy I was privileged to climb down the ladders and roam all over the bottom of the hole except a small body of water in the southeast corner where a spring was encountered. The north side of the quarry slanted at a steep angle toward the south, the east end terminated in a dike from two feet or more in thickness. The south side was never uncovered so that its termination is unknown and the west end sloped to ground level.

A peculiar feature of this immense work was that no pile of refuse stone every accumulated probably due to the fact that the refuse was carried away for fill elsewhere.

As the work progressed, two or three things were uncovered that are worthy of mention.

A pocket of large and perfect quartz crystals were uncovered and a large nugget of hornblend some seven feet or more long by three or four feet through it, was thrown aside in the brush and I presume it still lays there entirely forgotten.

There must have been several million tons of granite removed from this quarry. When the railroad was extended to Albany there was no further use for granite and the quarry became an expensive, useless toy which the railroad promptly dispensed with throwing 300 workmen out of jobs.

A fairly complete account of the pink granite business will be found in my history of Milford Pink Granite.

I will now return to history of Braggville—its history and decline to its present state.

At the time of settlement of Braggville, the passenger pigeons were so common in this area that in flight they would obscure the sun like a cloud. The early settlers made a practice of netting them for the Boston market and I have been told as many as 100 dozen were shipped in one week. This practice was so successful that they are now extinct.

In the early days, before the coming of the railroad, there was a road turning right below the district school near the Messenger Place and running diagonally through the woods to a location near the school house, (now destroyed by fire) then along the crest of the high land and finally turning left and under the

railroad through a beautiful stone bridge by the Hotel and on to Medway.

In later years the towns of Medway and Holliston built a new road known as South Street. This street turned left not far from the Hopping Brook bridge and ran nearly straight to the Railroad Station, crossing at grade in front of the station and thence practically straight to the Milford-Medway Road.

The building of this road practically ruined a large farm by cutting a wide swath practically a quarter of a mile long through the best tillage land. The taking so angered the owner that he sold out and moved elsewhere.

After the building of the hotel, the opening of the railroad and the building of the boot shops, Braggville appeared to be developing into a prosperous business center—but disaster was on the way. First the hotel was burned in the late 1860's, followed in a year or two by the loss of the two boot-shops on the same night and a few years later by the closing of the Railroad Stone Work—and Braggville was left with no means of livelihood.

Such were the conditions in Braggville during the Civil War period and after. During this time Mr. Arial Bragg, Jr., in pursuance of his promise to look out for the welfare of his family of one of his best workmen who was drafted into the military service, purchased a cow to furnish milk for the family.

We will now pay some attention to Mr. Appleton Bragg who, as a young man, had gone to New York where he became a broker in sole leather. It is said of him that at one time he had control of all available

sole leather in the country. He was so successful that he amassed a fortune and when, in later years, his father became financially embarrassed, he bought his father's farm and thus relieved the situation.

As a citizen of Milford, he indulged in many activities which, at the present time, seem ill-advised. He had a fondness for auctions and accumulated many articles of questionable value. When he built his hotel it seemed ill-advised to many although it attracted picnics from Boston.

He built, at considerable expense, a new road from East Main Street in Milford to the Holliston line where the Holliston road ended. This road saved more than a half mile in the distance of the railroad. As the town of Milford would not accept it, he cut a trench across it and fenced it off at the Holliston line. Both the trench and the fence still remain today.

Another ill-advised activity on which he spent considerable money was an attempt to change the course of Hopping Brook to run through and form a pond in his hotel yard. He was no engineer and failed to realize water will not run uphill. The remains of this trench may still be plainly seen parallel to the railroad track.

Although he indulged in many vagaries of poor judgement, he contributed many small tenement houses and thus advanced the growth of Braggville.

At one time, probably in the late 1860's, a large boulder in his cow pasture was used as a quarry for granite, probably for local use. Its remains may still be found in the middle of the pasture.

After the towns of Holliston and Medway built the new South Street, the town of Holliston erected

a new large two-story school house in which the second floor was a large hall for public gatherings. This hall was used for public services and amateur plays by local residents, and for Sunday evening services when members of a Holliston church came to conduct the service.

At one of these I made my first public utterance. My Aunt and a friend of hers had taken me, a small boy, to the service, and not being much interested, I had fallen asleep during the over-long closing prayer. My aunt attempted to arouse me preparatory to going home and in the midst of the prayer I became aroused sufficiently to remark: "Oh, shut up!" Needless to say, I was not further disturbed.

This school building is now burned to the ground. In the early days the old road turned left by the old district school, (now a dwelling) nearly opposite the Messenger Place, and ran southeasterly about a half a mile through the woods coming out not far from the new school building and crossing South Street diagonally, thence along the crest of the high land and again turning left under a stone arch bridge and through the hotel yard and on over Hopping Brook into Medway.

At that time my Grandfather, Mr. Dennis Hartshorn conducted a country grocery store in the building now occupied as a country residence by Mr. Lewis of Boston. The first railroad tickets were sold in my grandfather's store before completion of the Braggyville Station. I can well remember assisting my grandfather draping the station in mourning for President Garfield.

When the Braggville Station was completed, my grandfather became station master, a position he held until his death in 1887 when I took over until 1900.

After the opening of the railroad granite work, my grandfather closed his grocery store and it was later taken over by Antonio Lazzari as a boarding house for workmen on the Norcross Quarries. Antonio Lazzario was followed by Angelo Malnini and, after a long vacancy, by Mr. Lewis.

Early in 1888, after the death of my grandfather, it became necessary for me to assume the support of my grandmother and a maiden aunt. I became Station Master, Assistant Post Master, and Adams Express Agent, a position which I held for nine years.

During my tenure in this position, with a very poor district school education and no high school, my aunt, Professor Charlott Bragg of Wellesley College, suggested that I study mathematics in my spare time and attempt an examination for entrance to Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This I did and was admitted as a special student with the Class of 1898. To do this, I was relieved of my duties at the station, traveled 60 miles daily by rail, attended classes, did the clerical work of the station and studied for the next day at night.

Today this looks like an Herculean task. However, I did it with passing marks in all subjects save one. In doing this I became the only student Tech ever had with no common school education.

After leaving Tech I tutored Mr. Walter Roper in mathematics for a successful entrance to Tech and then entered the employ of the Draper Corporation for

one week and remained for 47 years, part of the time designing special automatic machinery and then connected with the advertising department.

At one period probably in the vicinity of 1850 Mr. Mellen C. Bragg made a business of digging peat and drying it for fuel. The pits from which this was dug gradually became full of water and I have caught many small pickerel there. To the present day these holes may be found if one knows where to look for them.

At a later date probably in the early 1890's Mr. Patrick Gillon conceived the idea of making a mowing field of a piece of this meadow. He had it cleared of brush and burned it. Much to his surprise the heat of burning ignited the peat and it burned for weeks destroying the land. It was finally extinguished by heavy rains.

These peat bogs probably extend for several miles along the valley of Hopping Brook. I personally have made soundings of eight feet without striking a solid bottom.

In the years gone by several unusual happenings occurred in this area. Somewhere in the 1870's there were born twin calves that were joined from the breast to the hind legs. These calves were perfectly formed and my uncle, a taxidermist, preserved them for the owner.

Another unusual birth in Holliston was that of a calf born inside out, the skin and hair being inside with the inside organs wrapped around the outside. If I had not seen this with my own eyes I should hardly believed it true.

In these early days drunkenness was very common and responsible for much hardship and in some cases murder, a case of double murder having occurred and the home destroyed by fire more than 100 years ago.

To complete this story I include an ode to our earliest settlers

THE OLD STONE WALL

It parallels the road for miles

 The rugged old stone wall

Its stones each one were layed with care

 In Winter, Spring or Fall

They also separate the lots

 As monuments they stand

To how our fathers toiled and sweat

 That they might clear the land

The stones of which they're made each one

 Were taken from the soil

Some from the top were gathered up

 And laid with patient toil

Some from beneath the sod were dug

 By use of pick and spade

To leave the soil all free from stone

 When once the wall was made

In size they vary, some are tall

 Some broad and others low

We see them all about the land

 When travelling we go

The size of lots the height of walls

 Mute monuments now stand

Of how much stone was gathered up

 To make good tillage land

They cleared the land these pioneers

 They tilled the fertile ground

The rugged wall they slowly built

 Show how much stone they found

Theirs was an age when things moved slow
Not like the present day
When farm work in the Fall was done
Then stone walls they would lay

From year to year they cleared new fields
Each wall-surrounded plot
Shows how much stone they gathered up
To clear that mowing lot

And now those walls a record stand
Left from out fathers day
Of honest toil which placed them there
Piled up out of the way

Built into them a record is
Of him who placed them there
The way they lay, how they are wedged
Aligned and placed with care

Some men were rugged stanch and true
They never shirked their part
They tilled their fields up to the walls
Allowed no weeds to start

Some were not careful near the wall
And weeds and brush would start
And then to get them clear again
Would break a weaklings heart

And as we see these walls today
A tale to us they tell
Some still erect unharmed by time
Proclaim they were made well

Some tumble down, brush overgrown
Proclaim a lack of care
They tell of slackness in the man
Whose labor placed them there

And e'en the stones of which they're made
Record for us today
From whence they came long long ago
E'er in the wall they lay

And so the wall a tale will tell
Go read it if you will
It's there for anyone to read
in stone both cold and still